

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE UPDATE

APRIL 22, 2002

The University of Nebraska Lincoln has announced that the Veterinary Sciences Lab at Scotts Bluff will close as of July 1, 2002. This is due to a decrease in the University budget. This lab is crucial to our continued testing of wild animals for CWD and the loss of this resource will be costly in added staff and travel time to the lab at North Platte. Additionally, the lab at North Platte is smaller and we will not be able to handle test animals as rapidly as we were at Scotts Bluff.

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks collected 53 deer from the vicinity of the one positive they had in Fall River County, near the town of Oral. All 53 tested negative for CWD. This is in addition to the 183 collected along the South Dakota/Nebraska border by both South Dakota GFP and NGPC, which also tested negative.

Tom Strickland, a candidate for the U. S. Senate from Colorado has requested U. S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman to convene a blue ribbon panel of experts to address the CWD issue on a national scale. He also called for increased funding for research and monitoring.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln will be ready to accept samples and test for CWD by the end of May of 2002.

Saskatchewan has confirmed another captive farm with CWD positive elk. This brings the total number of facilities in Saskatchewan with CWD positive results to 40.

A 22 year old British woman living in Florida has been diagnosed with variant CJD, the human form of Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy that is linked to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy. This does not mean that BSE has jumped to the U. S. since the woman lived in Britain at the height of the BSE outbreak there. Experts believe that she contracted the disease in Britain prior to moving to the United States. According to them, she has not been in the U.S. long enough for the disease to develop in her while in the States.

Dr. Richard Bessen, a TSE researcher at Creighton University in Omaha has contacted the Commission and offered his assistance on any work we may need done reference TSE. Dr. Bessen is a nationally known researcher who has done a lot of research on Mink Encephalopathy and Scrapie. I have set up an appointment with him for 1:30 P. M. on May 9th to discuss his possible involvement in our efforts and to pick his brain reference TSE diseases.